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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/05/2016
TAGS: [KPAL](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MA](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: MOROCCO RESPONSE TO POTUS MEETINGS WITH NETANYAHU
AND ABBAS; CLARIFICATIONS ON MOROCCO-ISRAEL MEETINGS AT UNGA

REF: SECSTATE 99834

Classified By: Political Counselor Gregory Thome, Reasons, 1.4 (b,d).

¶1. (C) PolCouns delivered reftel demarche to Moroccan MFA Director-General for Multilateral Affairs and the Middle East Mohammed Azaroual Oct. 5, following his return from the UNGA. Azaroual shared the GOM's appreciation for President Obama's deep engagement on Peace Process issues and for our read-out on the Netanyahu-Abbas meetings in New York. He also noted Morocco's "satisfaction" that the U.S. remains committed to its position on settlements. The GOM continues to view settlements as one of the key stumbling blocks to resuming meaningful negotiations -- and one that the Israelis will not compromise on without continued U.S. engagement.

¶2. (C) Azaroual confirmed that Foreign Minister Fassi Fihri did not meet his Israeli counterpart in New York on the margins of the UNGA, but noted that it was not for lack of trying. Both ministers had intended to meet informally, Azaroual said, but their schedules simply did not permit it. Azaroual himself did meet with members of the Israeli delegation at the DG level; he took the opportunity to express support for resumed negotiations while also "suggesting" to the Israelis that they needed "to give something to Abu Mazen, like for example some positive signal regarding the settlements." When asked how the Israelis responded, Azaroual stressed that they took it as a suggestion, not a demand, and in the generally positive spirit Morocco intended. (NOTE: Elements of the Moroccan press had churned out "scandal" headlines in September alleging that Fassi Fihri had met with Israeli FM Lieberman in New York -- allegations that the Moroccan MFA quickly denied by press release the following day. But the lower level contacts did take place, according to Azaroual. END NOTE)

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Millard